

# THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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## "Good Tidings of Great Joy"

*"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." - Luke 2:10.*

THAT which makes the Scriptures of such surpassing value to us is the fact that they tell us so much concerning the Lord himself, "whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." The Master told his hearers on one occasion, "Search the Scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39.) On the road to Emmaus the risen Lord caused the hearts of his two companions to burn within them as he opened up to them the Scriptures concerning himself, showing that Christ must needs suffer these things before entering into his glory. These were of course the Old Testament Scriptures. They were so clear and significant under the teaching of the greatest of all teachers that they made a deep and lasting impression on the hearts of the two disciples. Perhaps we could do no better in imparting a seasonable message than to trace through these same Old Testament Scriptures some of those familiar and famous prophecies concerning the coming of the Lord, both as respects his first and his second advent. We might call these *Messianic Stars*.

The great sea of human history has been divided into two parts, B.C. and A.D., and this division was marked off by the appearance of a "great star," the star which guided the Magi of the East to the manger where lay the Babe of Bethlehem. What has the Bible to say concerning this stupendous event? -- for stupendous it was when we reflect upon what really occurred in this humble scene of the nativity. What do we find in the Old Testament which was so clearly defined that men were at the proper time in expectation of the Messiah? Examining the record of the Prophets, we will note a long line of prophetic utterances of such import that they stand out in bold relief against an otherwise dark and hopeless background, in very much the same way that the literal stars stand out in the night sky against the background of the measureless heavens.

**A STAR OF HOPE**

These prophecies have their beginning at the very dawn of human history, when the violation of God's command had brought upon our first parents the inescapable penalty, "death" -- dying thou shalt die. However, God's mercy, which is ever at work, in keeping with his other attributes, extended a flickering ray of hope in the vague but meaningful words, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Not a very bright star is this one, but at least a twinkle of light in an otherwise darkened sky. From this moment forward "the seed" was to become a most important development of God's great Plan of the Ages, around which all other events would revolve. All of God's dealings with men and nations during Old Testament times were in preparation for that promised "seed." The purpose of God to send into the world his only begotten Son is continually kept in view by means of his own choosing. Even the line of descent from father to son is clearly and uninterruptedly traced from Adam down, until its end is found in the "Babe in the manger." Here the genealogy ceases since there is no further need for its continuance.

In the generations of Adam it is recorded of each individual that he lived so many years and "he died," but of the promised seed, the Second Man, the Lord from, heaven, it is said, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hides and of death" (Rev. 1:18). Thus we see how great a light was lighted at Bethlehem, and how luminous has become the little twinkle in Eden, "the seed of the woman," whose mission has become an accomplished fact.

### **STAR OF PROMISE**

The next star we observe on the horizon of human affairs is in association with the life of Abraham. The story is a familiar one, but always a source of inspiration to the Lord's faithful. Here the light shines with clearer and steadier ray, when in rewarding Abraham's faithfulness the promise comes clear, strong, and definite: "Because thou hast done this thing, and has not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:16-18).

We are all aware of the life of faith and obedience which eventuated in this far-reaching promise to Abraham. How closely it touches the life of every Christian when we read concerning its fulfillment that "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). This promise has been a spiritual beacon, through all the intervening centuries in natural Israel and then to spiritual Israel, for it contains so very much of hope for the poor groaning creation. It is the herald of good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people. Its surety is attested by the oath of him who said, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11).

The Gospel was indeed preached before unto Abraham, when to him was said: "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" -- a comprehensive but positive statement as to what God's purpose is with respect to the human family.

### **STAR OF JACOB**

We come now to a third Messianic. Star, which appears in connection with the closing days of Jacob's life. Brighter and brighter do they shine as we go on. Jacob, aware that his life was drawing to a close, calls for a gathering of his sons. "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell

you that which shall befall you in the last days.... The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:1, 10).

We are not left to human speculation as to the significance of this prophecy or the identity of the one to whom it refers. We know that our Lord sprang from the tribe of Judah. In fact, he is referred to in Revelation 5:5 as the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the one worthy to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof. Jacob's message to Judah is thus seen to be of deep import and to have far reaching and everlasting results. It sets forth the Lion of the tribe of Judah as the One through whom will come the blessings of the great Millennial Age.

### **A STAR IN THE TYPICAL HEAVENS**

Another prophecy was given in the days of Moses: Deuteronomy 18:15: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." Deut. 18:18: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."

We see in Moses, to whom these words were spoken, a type of the Prophet to come. Moses, in his Office as mediator and leader of his people, found it his duty to direct the minds of his people to the one true God, and to obedience to that one God. Jesus, the antitype, will perform a far greater and more effectual mediatorial work than did Moses for the children of Israel. His great Kingdom will be from sea to sea, and his kingly sway to the ends of the earth, which will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the great deep.

### **A STAR OF FIRST MAGNITUDE**

We find in the Psalms also a prophecy of our Lord: "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Ps. 2:7, 8).

This Psalm, written by David out of his own experience, portrays the great struggle which shall attend the ushering in of the Lord's Kingdom, against the opposition of entrenched powers of evil. The Psalm also refers to certain aspects of our Lord's first advent. Its language is so vivid and comprehensive that it takes its place among the major prophecies respecting the coming of the Lord to take control of earth's affairs. We might therefore consider it as one of the brighter Messianic Stars -- a prophetic star of first magnitude.

### **THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM**

Coming now to another portion of the inspired Word, namely, Isaiah, we also come to a great galaxy of Messianic Stars, for Isaiah is recognized as one of the major Prophets, who spoke out in great detail regarding the coming Kingdom and its King. Notable among these is our sixth Messianic Star, which is found in Isaiah 7:14: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." In Matthew 1:22, 23, this prophecy is applied to the birth of Jesus. Here it is specifically stated that it is a fulfillment of the words of the Prophet; that Jesus was born of a virgin, and that he would save his people from their sins. The details which attended this great event are familiar to all and need not be rehearsed here, but it is pertinent to our theme to call attention to the celestial activity that accompanied it. To the humble shepherds on the Judean

hillside it was announced under the glare of a heavenly light by an angel from heaven, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12). What a sign! What a contrast to the general evidences attending the birth of a child! What a condescension for the One who was the Logos, the Creator of all things, to be thus made in the likeness of men! What a humble, helpless- beginning! A babe in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes! This shall be a sign unto you shepherds when you come to present yourselves to worship him. That is, the circumstances surrounding his birth would be so unusual as to leave no doubt in their minds that this was the long promised Messiah: the Savior of Israel. How perfectly adapted were the surroundings to the thought that "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

Here we might also consider another aspect of this most wonderful story. "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him" (Matt. 2:1, 2). Who were these who had traveled so far by faith, to see what to them the Scriptures and the heavens had indicated so clearly? The Scriptures do not identify them, yet they do leave us with the impression that they were men of faith, a faith moreover which linked them to the prophecies concerning a coming Messiah, a deliverer for Israel, a king of the Jews.

How they obtained the information which moved them to make such a journey we can only surmise; however, it must have come directly or indirectly from the Holy Scriptures which were available at that period; perhaps brought to their attention by displaced Jews then living in the East.

Their presence in Jerusalem greatly interested Herod the King, who with sinister purpose, sought their aid in locating the whereabouts of the child. Warned by the Lord in a dream against *any* such course, these men refrained from any cooperation with Herod or his deadly schemes. The star which had been their guide in their long journey from the east, now, with unerring accuracy, directed them to the very spot where the child lay; thus their efforts were rewarded. Here they worshiped the child and offered their significant gifts: gold, suggestive of his origin and his destiny; frankincense, speaking of his life as a sweet incense unto God; myrrh, fitting for him who was to be a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

Farrar, in dealing with this event, points out on good authority that an astronomical event of first magnitude, according to history, occurred about this time, i.e., a conjunction or trigon of three major planets in the zodiacal area, generally ascribed as having to do with Judea. This trigon was also joined by another *very* brilliant star which blazed forth for a time with the brightness of a diamond, and then gradually faded away. There are ways of determining that these things did occur about the time of the birth of Jesus and were, or may have been, the very phenomena witnessed and interpreted by the Magi from the East. So the Prophet in the words before quoted (Isa. 7:14) forecast an event of greatest possible importance that was attested by celestial confirmation.

### **THE ROYAL STAR**

Isaiah 9:6, 7: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall

be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." To a people ruled over by a hated usurper not even of their own nation, it must have been a treasured thought that one day there would be a child born whose destiny would be to rule over his people; that a son would be given to sit upon the throne of David, in accordance with the covenant God had made with that illustrious monarch, for he had promised David that one of his seed would be ruler of a Kingdom which would be established forever (2 Sam. 7:12, 13). The character of that great King is well outlined for us in the titles which are ascribed to him by the Prophet.

### **WONDERFUL COUNSELOR**

These words describe the One who would possess the wisdom to guide all the affairs of his worldwide dominion. How necessary that seems in our day, when men are wrestling hopelessly with the problems besetting the age in which we live. Men take counsel together concerning the great questions and situations that confront them. They try hard, but failing to seek the "wisdom that cometh from above," their counsel comes to naught. "If any . . . lack wisdom," we are told by the Apostle James, "let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not" (James 1:5). This wisdom is so different from that of the world, which is foolishness and perisheth. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, . . ." (James 3:17). How true this is can be vouched for by those who are privileged during this Gospel Age to follow in the footsteps of this Wonderful Counselor, and thus profit by the wisdom from above, which he is so willing to impart to those who ask for it in faith.

### **MIGHTY GOD**

This Wonderful Counselor is also a mighty One whose power has already been demonstrated in creation; the One, too, in whom is vested the power to carry out the Divine commission with respect to the salvation of the world; "mighty to save" in that he has given himself as the purchase price for the whole race lost in Adam, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). What greater demonstration of power could we conceive of than that he should raise the dead, for indeed, all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth. He is the resurrection and the life. His mighty power will be marvelously demonstrated when he lays hold of that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and binds him with a great chain, putting him in the pit and sealing it, that thus he should deceive the nations no longer. Then with Satan and his evil influences in restraint, the great work of restoring all things will be carried forward speedily and without hindrance, bringing Divine blessings unto "all people."

### **EVERLASTING FATHER**

Life is invested in the Father, and Jesus is Life-giver because he has the right to impart life to every one who will come unto God by him. He is the One in whom resides the power to regenerate, to give life to all those who were lost in Adam. This not only involves a resurrection from the dead, but a loving and considerate guidance up the highway of holiness; a dispensing of the gifts and blessings of that glorious Kingdom to the obedient, to all who will then hear and obey the voice of "that Prophet."

### **THE PRINCE OF PEACE**

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. Need we say anything about the fact that "peace" is uppermost in the minds of the people most of the time. The strange thing is that men go about promoting it in direct opposition to the ways of the great Prince of Peace. It is, therefore, a foregone conclusion that there will be no peace until he who stilled the waves of Galilee shall speak peace. This, we believe, will be after the greatest of all storms, which seems now to be building up on the horizon and before which men's hearts are failing them for fear.

Little do men realize what a feast of fat things the Lord has planned for his creatures beyond this vale of tears. The Word of God leaves no doubt as to the character of that Kingdom, for it presents a most amazing contrast to that of Satan's kingdom, under which mankind has been learning the exceeding sinfulness of sin, where there has been sin, sickness and death, violence and bloodshed, unrighteousness and oppression. There, in the Kingdom to come, it will be peace, harmony, and plenty; and there love, goodness, and mercy will prevail, and a harmony which will adjust the separation -of man and beast which is based on fear, for, according to the Prophet, the lion shall lose his carnivorous propensity and be measurably domesticated, as will be all the animal kingdom. Then man's original dominion over that kingdom will be restored. How precious are the thoughts concerning that day as they are portrayed for us by the Revelator in the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, where we read:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (Rev. 21:1-5).

How wonderful and significant, then, are the words announced to those trembling shepherds on the Judean hillside: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

"Silent night! holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright  
Round yon virgin mother and Child!  
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace,  
Sleep in heavenly peace.

"Silent night! holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight!  
Glories stream from heaven afar,  
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!  
Christ, the Savior, is born,  
Christ, the Savior, is born.

"Silent night! holy night!

Son of God, love's pure light;  
Radiant beams Thy holy face,  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,  
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth."

*- J. B. Webster.*

## Half Hour Meditations on Romans

### No. 26

In our previous meditations we have noted that the Apostle has demonstrated that the Jews as well as the Gentiles are fit subjects of Gods true or impartial judgment. He has anticipated the objection: "But in that case, what becomes of Jewish privilege?" And he has shown that real and great though it be, it can not hinder their rejection and judgment. He now asks,

*"What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin". -- Rom. 3:9.*

### Have We Jews A Defense?

*Some diversity of viewpoint has been held as to the meaning of the word which in our Authorized Version is translated "are we better (than they)?" One writer, though himself preferring another translation, informs us that "the great body of expositors, both ancient and modern, have supposed that it must mean, do we excel?" It is so translated in the *Diaglott*. This writer, however, notes "an insuperable objection to this interpretation of the verb, that it is absolutely without precedent. The verb in the active voice does mean, in the neuter branch of its import, to excel . But it has no such import in the middle voice. The most learned of those who contend for the interpretation make the admission."*

Those who so desire may see the meaning of this word exhaustively considered in the works of eminent scholars. We content ourselves here with presenting the conclusion of the writer from whom we have above quoted. After an elaborate treatise, in the course of which he shows the word to have been used by ancient writers in the sense of *defense*, and that a loyalty to this sense of the word appears in the works of many expositors, some of whom "sit on the very highest bench of scholarship," he concludes that "there can be no reasonable room for doubting that the word in the passage before us, means, *Do we put forth pleas in self defense? that is, Do we defend ourselves (before the tribunal of God)?"*

### No, in No Wise

The question, *What then ?* with which Rom. 3:9 commences most naturally refers to the preceding paragraph, namely, that the advantage possessed by the Jew in his peculiar relations and institutions is *much in every respect*. It is as though the Apostle were to say, Since it is the case that the privileges of the Jew, whatever use or abuse may be made of them, are much in every respect, what then? In maintaining that the prerogative of the Jews is much in every respect, do we Jews thereby bring forth a plea for the justification of our moral state and in defense of our To this question the Apostle replies: " *No, in no right to everlasting life? wise ."* In asking this question, and answering it as he does, the Apostle does not mean that there would be none among his countrymen who would be ready to defend themselves in judgment. He means that when he himself speaks in reference to them, and as far as possible in their behalf, and as one of them, he will not, and does not, and cannot speak in the way of defense. He cannot plead, *Not guilty* . He was profoundly convinced that guilt was attaching to himself for his own unrighteousness. And he was equally sure that it was attaching to all his countrymen for theirs. Such is the significance of the Apostles identification of himself with the mass of his countrymen when he says we. "



The Apostle gives the reason, or at least a reason, why he did not and would not and could not put in pleas for them. It would be utterly inconsistent on his part to attempt any such defense: "*For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.*" The word translated "proved" properly means "charged" or "impeached." The Apostle is referring here to his impeachment of the Gentiles in Rom. 1:18-32, and of the Jews in Rom. 2:1-29. In those passages he not only charged both Gentiles and Jews as being all under sin, but maintained that the Gentiles are "without excuse" Rom. 1:20), and the Jews inexcusable" (Rom. 2:1). "The expression, under sin is pictorially significant. By a natural personification -- specially familiar to the mind of our Apostle -- sin is represented as being the lord of the sinner. For the moment that a man commits sin, he makes a slave of himself and is liable for ever afterwards, unless Divine mercy interpose, to be under the lash of retribution."

### **It is Written**

The Apostle having stated that he had "charged both Jews and Gentiles with being all under sin," proceeds to prove that his accusation is in full accord with the Old Testament scriptures.

*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes." -- Rom. 3:10-18*

Here St. Paul groups together into a cluster a number of detached Old Testament statements which attest the legitimacy of his impeachment. "In drawing this picture, which is only a grouping together of strokes of the pencil, made by the hands of psalmists and prophets, he does not certainly mean that each of these characteristics is found equally developed in every man. Some, even the most of them, may remain latent in many men; but they all exist in germ in the selfishness and natural pride of the ego, and the least circumstance may cause them to pass into the active state, when the fear [reference] of God does not govern the heart."

### **The Reverence of the Lord is the Principal Part of Wisdom**

What a commentary these quotations make on the wise mans counsel: "The reverence of the Lord is the beginning [the principal part] of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7). And of wisdom (Prov. 9:10). *There is none that understandeth*, quotes the Apostle. "From the standpoint both of the psalmist and of the Apostle and indeed of all biblical writers, every man is deficient in understanding (see Rom. 1:21, 31), who does not apply his intelligence to the things which concern his relations to God -- so as to be guided aright in his conduct in reference to God. All the finite objects on which the intelligence may terminate are but intended to be the rounds of a ladder by which the mind may mount up to God. He who does not mount by means of these objects, *does not understand, is not wise* . He has not grasped the realities of things in their true relations. He does not construe aright the lesson which is spread out before him."

In the language of one well known to, and much esteemed and loved by, the readers of this journal: "To render all we have to the Lords service is not only a reasonable thing, but an offering far too small far less than what we would like to render to him who has manifested such compassion and grace toward us.

And we should feel thus, even if there were no rewards attached to . . . a consecration of ourselves.

But inasmuch as God has attached great rewards and blessings, we should feel that a refusal to accept would be an indication of non appreciation of Divine mercy and . . . *an indication also of weakness of mind, of judgment, which is unable to balance the trifling and transitory pleasures of self will for a few short years, with an eternity of joy and blessing and glory, in harmony with the Lord.*"

### **Corruption in Word and Deed**

The careful student will not fail to notice that there is an appreciable method in the arrangement of the Old Testament scriptures which the Apostle groups together here that form such an appallingly accurate picture of human depravity. First the *universality* of sin is affirmed, and the *more general characteristics* of human corruption are mentioned (Rom. 3:10-12). Next the prevalence of sin in speech is specified, both the coarse as well as the sugared tongue (Rom. 3:13-14). In the next three verses (Rom. 3:15-17), the picture of human depravity manifesting itself in word is completed by the description of the same wickedness *showing itself in deeds*. Finally, in Rom. 3:18, the *fountain* from which all this evil of both word and deed flows is specified.

The overflow of all this depravity arises from a sad void -- the absence of true piety, of that sense of reverence for God which should have filled the human heart.

Such is the conclusion which the Apostle reaches in regard to the whole human race. But the Jew might yet object that many of these Old Testament quotations referred not to them but to the Gentiles. St. Paul foresees this object, and in the next verse, Rom. 3:19, takes care to set it aside so that nothing may impair the sweep of the sentence which God pronounces on the state of mankind.

### **To Whom Does the Law Speak?**

*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." -- Rom. 3:19*

The point of importance which the Apostle would here emphasize is contained in the words "to them." It is undoubtedly true that many portions of the Old Testament spoke of Gentiles, as for example, in those passages of scripture in which we read of "the burden of Egypt, the burden of Damacus, the burden of Edom, the burden of Nineveh," etc. In such passages there is no question but that the Lord through his prophets is describing the sins and impending punishment of Gentile nations. But even such passages while speaking of Gentiles were spoken to *Israel for their special benefit*. "It is obvious indeed, that the Old Testament, while depicting to the Jews the wickedness of the Gentiles, did not at all mean to embitter them against the latter, *but to put them on their guard against the same sins*, and preserve them from the same judgments; a proof that God say in their hearts the same germs of corruption, and foresaw their inevitable development if the Jews did not remain faithful to him."

When the Apostle says, " *we know*," he seems to be appealing to the common sense of his readers, who ever they might be, Jews, Gentiles, or Christians. He is treading on ground which cannot be disputed. It is as though he were to say: "We know every one does, that what things soever the law saith (or contains), and these things especially which I have just quoted, *are*

*spoken to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world, not excepting the Jews, become liable to pay penalty to God."*

### **That Every Mouth May Be Stopped**

"Oh solemn silence, when at last it comes! The harsh or muffled voices of self defense, of self assertion, are hushed at length. The man, like one of old, when he saw his righteous self in the light of God, lays his hand on his mouth (Job 40:4) " He leaves speech to God and learns at last to listen. What shall he hear? An eternal repudiation? An objurgation, and then a final and exterminating anathema? No, something far other, and better, and more wonderful. But there must first be silence on mans part if it is to be heard. Hear- -and your souls shall live.

"So the great argument pauses, gathered up into an utterance which at once concentrates what has gone before and prepares us for a glorious sequel. Shut thy mouth, O man, and listen now:

*"Because by means of works of law there shall be justified no flesh in his presence; for by means of law comes -- moral knowledge of sin." -- Rom. 3:20*

- P. L. Read

### **Recently Deceased**

Br D. F. Jowett, Shotton, Chester, Eng.  
Sr. Alida Jutila, Hancock, Mich.- (Sept.)  
Bro. E. H. Kuhn, E. Liverpool, Ohio - (Oct.)  
Bro. George Petrie, Detroit, Mich. - (July)  
Sr. Mae Rife, Troy, Ohio - (Oct.)

*"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."*

## Ebenezer

*"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." - 1 Samuel 7:12.*

NEXT month, if the Lord will, we shall enter the gateway of another year. Today, we pause to look back over the path already trod. The close of each year marks another milestone in our lives. It may be likened to a signpost pointing in two directions. Over the path already trod, we read: "HITHERTO," while indicating the road before us, it points: "HENCEFORTH."

We cannot, of course, go back. Time passed has passed forever. *Nor* are we unmindful that the Apostle Paul exhorts us to "forget the things that are behind." (Phil. 3: 1.3.) Yet surely not to the exclusion of many precious lessons! The words of the poet find an echo in our hearts

"Deep on my heart let memory trace  
His acts of mercy and of grace."

Looking back over the wider scene of world history, what a dark and gloomy picture is presented to us! Whichever way we look, hope seems to have almost died; the fading hope of peace and prosperity at the commencement of the year has almost reached the vanishing point. Nations are snarling at one another, and people begin to wonder how long it will be before they are at each other's throats; all this in spite of the certain knowledge that another great conflict between the nations must bring down in complete ruin the whole tottering structure of this civilization. Indeed, we are seriously warned by men of science that the extinction of all life upon this planet is now within the realm of possibility. The atom bomb of Hiroshima is now superseded by the hydrogen bomb, of which it was reported before the Atomic Energy Commission in U.S.A. that "*one* hydrogen bomb could cause 84,000,000 deaths and injure another 20,000,000." As crisis follows crisis, and conference succeeds conference, "men's hearts fail them for fear," there is "distress of nations with perplexity [Greek -- "no way out"]." Nationally, internationally, politically and economically, the year just passed has been one of rapid retrogression. Statesmen and politicians are unable to keep pace with the swift march of events, or to halt the onward steps of the nations toward complete chaos and anarchy.

### **ISRAEL - "A BURDENSOME STONE"**

Again looking back over the pathway of the past year, the prophetic student and men of good will cannot fail to be impressed by the tragedy of Israel. What a dark and wearisome path the year 1964 has been. Unwanted by the nations of the earth, and established as a nation in the land of their forefathers, they have sought to find rest and forgetfulness of the past. But strategy, diplomacy, and the greed of men have denied them even this. Promises and pledges made to them have been broken, and their faith in men and nations has been shattered. Surrounded by enemies as they are, the whole world cast their eyes upon Israel and tremble. How true have been the words of Jehovah through the Prophet of old: "*Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about . . . and in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people.*" -Zech. 12:2, 3.

Such, then, is the picture which presents itself to us as we look back over the world-scene of 1964. It is not a pleasant picture; perhaps it is best described in the words of Daniel: "*a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation,*" or in the words of the Prophet Joel: "*a day of*

*darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, like the morning dawn spread out upon the mountains." - Joel 2:2, Leeser.*

However, dark though the picture is, yet to the watchful Bible student the happenings of 1964 are a cause of glad expectancy and hopeful anticipation. For years Christians have prayed for the coming of God's Kingdom; for years they have known that "this present evil world" must pass away. As was to be expected, the demolition process involves a period of inconvenience and unpleasantness -- all that is implied in the prayer - "*Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done ON EARTH.*"

With the Word of God before *us*, and looking back over the scene behind, the question arises: "What is there left of unfulfilled prophecy prior to the establishment of the Kingdom of peace and righteousness in the earth? Are *we* not able to see that the greater part of Biblical prophecy is now history? Whatever may be our views of the many interpretations of chronology, *we cannot mistake the signs foretold* which indicate with clarity that the final overthrow of Satan's empire is close at hand! The restoration of Israel and the regathering of her people to the Land of Promise "in the last days," as foretold, continues steadily toward its full accomplishment, although we have yet to see the final trouble which is to come upon them there. These things lie a short way along the road marked: "HENCEFORTH"; but that which concerns the child of God most intimately is the fact that *before the final collapse* of the kingdoms of earth and the establishment of God's Kingdom, the Bride of Christ, the Lamb's wife, must enter into her inheritance and be joined unto her Lord! "The Bride," having made herself ready, will soon enter "with him to the marriage." "AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT"! That is the point of momentous interest to us; that, to us, is the meaning of world events *as* we look back over the past year! THE TIME IS SHORT!

### **"SEARCH ME, O GOD"**

Again we look back over the road marked: "HITHERTO" -- and this time it is to be a more individual and personal viewpoint; a little self-examination and searching of the heart. What sort of road has it been for me during 1964? There are some who will look back into the past year and recall that it was then they commenced to walk along this road as "new creatures in Christ Jesus." Others will look further back into the past and remember that they have seen many New Years since they commenced to walk this "narrow road." But length of time is not the important factor so far as God's estimation of us is concerned. *How have we used that time -- how are we using the time?* That is what matters in God's sight.

For every true child of God the year 1964 has been a year of "ups and downs." There have been high hopes, and there have been disappointments. Doubtless the year began with good resolutions and a firm resolve to walk more closely in the Master's footsteps; with a sincere determination that God's will, and his will only, would be the controlling force directing every motive, every thought, word, and deed. It began with a reaffirmation of our consecration vows. Now, at the commencement of 1965 how thankful we can be that the good resolutions and the firm resolve have not broken down; the determination that God's will shall direct our lives remains the same; the earnest desire toward Christlikeness is also still unaltered. Alas, in spite of all this, there have been mistakes; there have been "fightings within and fears without," and battles have been lost -- "the old man" has gained the victory. It is recorded that D. L. Moody, the evangelist, once remarked: "I've had more trouble with myself than with any other man I have ever met," and how truly that describes our own experience through the year.

## **"NOT ONE WORD HATH FAILED"**

Yet, in spite of everything that has come to us, we look back along the road marked: "HITHERTO," and from our hearts testify to the truth that "HITHERTO *bath the Lord helped us.*" He has never failed us. When we have forgotten him, he has remembered us. He has strengthened us in weakness; he has comforted us in tribulation; he has given peace in times of mental conflict, and O, how tender and merciful he has been when we have failed and stumbled in the way. Who will not echo the words of the Psalmist: "Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said, 'My foot slippeth' - thy mercy, O Lord, held me up." (Psa. 94:17, 18.) Or of Joshua: "*Not one thing hath failed* of all the good things which the Lord our God spake concerning us; all are come to pass unto us and *not one thing hath failed thereof.*" - Josh. 23:14.

Yet have there not been many joys and blessings along the road of 1964 -- the joys of service and of fellowship? Have we not rejoiced in an enlarging appreciation of God's wondrous Plan for all mankind which unfolds more rapidly every day, and at a pace undreamed of in earlier years? However, this wider vision is but a means to an end, for the acquisition of knowledge is not an end in itself. God is outworking his designs, not only in the world about us, but in our hearts and lives. He has in view the development of that "Seed of Promise" which is to bring peace and blessing to the world. And dare we be unmindful of his desire for a Home, and his intention to have a family of Divine sons in fullest fellowship with himself? Are these our desires also? Are these the things which are uppermost in our thoughts and to which our lives are being molded? Have we during the year that is past sought *first* the Kingdom of God and his righteousness? Can it be said, from the heart, that everything else in our lives has taken second place to this glorious Hope of our Calling?

At the commencement of our Christian pilgrimage we said in our hearts:

"Take my life, and may it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee."

But life is a period of years -- sometimes many, sometimes few--and as we echo the sentiments of those words we consider the whole course of life from consecration till death, a life which "*on the whole*" has been spent for God. Yet should it not be remembered that life is made up of years; a year is made up of months; a month, of weeks; a week, of days; a day, of hours; an hour, of minutes, and a minute is composed of seconds. When, therefore, our lives were surrendered to God and his service, we pledged ourselves to use *every moment* as faithful stewards in his employ.

## **"Take My Moments and My Days"**

This was the sentiment of the heart. Have I used *every moment* of the 366 days of 1964 in full accord with my consecration pledge? That is not an extremist way of searching our hearts; it is the only correct way of examining our progress on the Christian road. It is the way which will urge us to more progress toward the Goal along the road which is marked: "HENCEFORTH."

- Edwin Allbon, Eng.

## Is the Apocalypse a Jewish or Christian Prophecy?

AT THE close of our consideration of this question last month, we noted that St. John referred to himself as a brother and companion in tribulation of those to whom he wrote; and as the tribulation mentioned was being suffered by him, and by them, because of their identification with, and testimony on behalf of, Jesus Christ, his words could scarcely be understood as addressed to Jews, but would be most appropriate to his fellow Christians. (See November *Herald*, page 142.)

Again, in chapter 6, under the fifth seal, we have a symbolic vision having reference to martyrs, of whom it is said that they were "slain for the Word of God, and the testimony which they held." This evidently means that they were slain for confessing their *Christian faith*; in other words, like St. John, they suffered because they were Christians.

In chapter 7, under the sixth seal, there is presented to us a company in heaven, of whom it is said, they came out of great tribulation. These were not Jews, for it is stated that they were gathered out from "every nation and kindred and tongue." It is also said of them that "they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Unquestionably these were Christian martyrs, also.

In the eighth chapter mention is made of "the prayers of all saints," and "the prayers of saints." Prayers ascend from suppliants on earth; and "saints" in New Testament language means *Christians*. "We have no right in the last book of the New Testament to revert to the Old Testament signification of this word. Let the general tone of John's Gospel and Epistles be recalled, and his choice of *this* word [saint] to designate true Christians, in the midst of an ungodly world, and falsely professing church, will be felt to be in beautiful harmony. What is the grand distinction made in John's Epistles between true Christians and those who are not? It is *holiness, saintship*. 'If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin.' . . .

"Such language shows that in the eyes of St. John, practical purity and holiness, *saintliness*, is the grand characteristic of Christians. When, therefore, we find *him* consistently designating a certain body by the distinctive appellation of 'the saints,' we conclude that those so called are *true Christians*, in opposition to the ungodly or to false professors. Where does John ever apply such, a term to Jews? Where in the whole New Testament can the term be found so applied? Why then should we assert that it is applied to Jews here? Paul uses it forty-three times, and in every case as a synonym for Christians. Luke uses it four times in the Acts, and Jude twice in his epistle, in the same sense; in fact, only once is it used in any equivocal sense in the whole New Testament. ('Many bodies of the saints which slept arose.' - Matt. 27:52.)

"We observe these 'saints,' who are thirteen times mentioned in the Apocalypse, doing and bearing exactly what we know from other Scriptures the saints of the Christian Church must do and bear in this dispensation. We find them watching, waiting, praying, enduring tribulation (Rev. 13:10), resting in heaven (Rev. 14:12, 13), and at last manifested as the Bride of Christ, and as the 'armies which were in heaven,' clad under both emblems, with the 'fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints'; we find them associated with the martyrs of *Jesus* (Rev. 17:6), a clear proof that they cannot be Jewish saints.

## CALLED, CHOSEN, AND FAITHFUL WALK THE NARROW WAY

"In short, so far from the Church being actually and exclusively in heaven, at the commencement of the prophetic drama of this book, *she is seen on earth during the entire course*. She is seen *collectively* under various symbols, such as the one hundred and forty-four thousand, the two witnesses, the sun-clad woman, the armies of heaven, the New Jerusalem; and her members are seen *severally* as 'the saints.' They are seen first in their sufferings, and then in their glory; first slain for Jesus' sake, then enthroned beside him. Can it be questioned that the saints who pray, and wait, and suffer, and die as martyrs of Jesus, are the *same* saints, the 'called and chosen, and faithful,' who are seen with the Lord afterwards, as his Bride, and as his white-robed followers? If they are *not*, the unity of the book is gone, it becomes an incomprehensible Confusion. If the saints who form the bride of the Lamb in chapter 19, are not the saints who in the previous chapters witnessed for him in life and in death, then the lesson written most legibly on the pages of prophecy-the lesson that, in spite of ignorance and obscurity, the Church in all ages has learned from it-the truth that sustained millions of martyrs in their protracted sufferings and cheered them in their dying agonies-the truth with which this prophecy seems instinct, '*If we suffer, we shall also reign with him,*' is utterly obliterated from its pages! The suffering 'saints' get no reward; and the happy, blessed Bride, rises not from a surging sea of sorrow and suffering to the joy of her Lord's embrace, and the glory of his throne. One of the great morals of the book is gone, as well as its dramatic *unity*....

"This system of interpretation involves, besides, a logical inconsistency. The Bride is the Christian Church; her raiment *identifies* her with the previously mentioned 'saints,' and the 'saints' [this wrong interpretation says] are a Jewish remnant. \*

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\* "The future existence of a Jewish remnant is not denied, though their history and experience are mapped out by a certain school of prophetic interpreters, far more definitely than by the Word of God. That the remnant or remainder of the Jewish nation, will be restored to Palestine, before the Millennium, brought there into great trouble, and prepared by it to say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,' that Christ will appear for their deliverance, and that they will be converted at the sight of him, this much seems clear from Scripture. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance, and he has not cast away his people whom he foreknew."

"The only way of avoiding the force of this argument is, to deny that the Bride of the Lamb is the Church; for it is evident that the Bride is identical with the saints, and it is evident also that the saints are on earth, during the whole course of the book. Those who are resolved to prove that the Church is *not* represented on earth in these visions, must therefore not only deny that the saints *are* the Church, but seeing the saints are identical with the Bride, must also *deny that the Bride is the Church*; ... and many Futurists are to be found, who actually *do* deny this....

"The Bride of Christ a Jewish remnant! It is then of the Jewish remnant that the Apostle Paul speaks in Ephesians 5; it is of the Jewish remnant that Eve and Rebecca and others . . . are types. It is of a Jewish remnant that Paul says, 'I have espoused you as a chaste virgin to Christ!' . . .

"Let it be granted, then, that fulfilling all these types from Eden downward, and realizing all the figures of most intimate association and union which language can convey-the vine and the branches, the head and the members, the bridegroom and the bride-the white-robed saintly bride of Revelation 19, is the Church of the redeemed; and we claim that without all contradiction, *the Church is on earth during the action of the Apocalypse, and that therefore the Apocalypse is a Christian prophecy, fulfilled in the Christian era.*"



## **IS THE APOCALYPSE A SEALED BOOK?**

"Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand." -Rev. 22:10.

These words were spoken to St. John by the angel who was the agent employed to show him the visions of the future glory of the suffering saints. He saw illustrated the words of St. Paul: "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." The witnessing, suffering saints of the Gospel Age, who were seen by St. John in the visions all through the Apocalyptic drama, were now observed by him as the Bride of the Lamb, reigning with him. They had "filled up that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ." The words, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand," were uttered by the revealing angel at the close of the prophetic visions. The meaning and deep significance of the words are very strongly emphasized when considered in connection with the words of the heavenly messenger to the Prophet Daniel with respect to certain visions relating to events then future: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.... And he said, Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." (Dan. 12:4, 9.) In the case of Daniel, it was, Seal the words *until "the time of the end"*; in the case of St. John it was the very reverse -- "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book: *for the time is at hand.*"

To most minds, these words of the revealing angel to St. John would be a sufficient answer to the question, Are the Apocalyptic prophecies sealed? The answer would be, No. Unlike those of Daniel, the Apocalyptic prophecies are *not* sealed. One who holds that the Apocalypse describes events that have to do with the Jewish remnant living on the earth *after* the Church is glorified, takes the position that it has been sealed during the entire period of the Gospel Age. His words are:

"The book is called a 'Revelation,' and one would naturally think that it would be so plain that a wayfaring man though a fool, need not err in understanding it, because to 'reveal' a thing is to make it known and understandable. Furthermore, the command was distinctly given: 'Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book.' (Rev. 22:10.) How then shall we explain the fact that the book is not generally understood, but on the other hand, seems to be more tightly locked than any of the other prophecies? I believe that the explanation of this enigma lies in the statement found in Rev. 1:10, that when this Revelation was given to John on Patmos, he was 'in the spirit on the Lord's day.' Here, then, is where the Book will be really what it claims to be. It will then be a revelation, when the day of the Lord arrives. The day of the Lord stands in contrast to man's day. See 1 Cor. 4:3, margin; or *Diaglott.*"

We cite this statement because it is a fair illustration of the extreme Futurist view.

## **ONLY SAINTS UNDERSTAND MYSTERIES OF KINGDOM**

In reply to the statement that because "the book is called a revelation, one would naturally think that it would be so plain that a wayfaring man though a fool need not err in understanding it," there is this to be said: We have not yet reached the time when the Word of God -- his Revelation of Truth-is plain and clear to all humanity. The revelation of Divine truth is reserved for only the faithful in this Age. Indeed, both the Scriptures and the facts of history teach that only a very few who have read the Scriptures up to the present time have come to understand the purposes of God as contained in them. The Savior settled once and for all this matter when he said to his disciples: "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables; that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand." (Mark 4:11-12.) And furthermore, the recorded prayer of our Savior teaches the same thing: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth,

because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." - Matt. 11:25.

We will examine first the words of the revealing angel: "Seal not the saying; of the prophecy of this book." It is observed that it is the *prophetic* portion of the book that is specially referred to in these words. The book is by Christ divided into three parts, as we read: "Write the things *which thou hast* seen, and, the things *which are*, and the things *which shall be hereafter*." - Rev. 1:19.

The things which St. John *saw*, which he was to write, are thus mentioned: "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, *I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man*," etc. - Rev. 1:1.2, 13.

The "*things which are*," that is, the things which *were* in St. John's *day*, have reference to the conditions that existed in the seven Churches of Asia, which conditions are described most fully in chapters two and three.

The things "*which shall be hereafter*," are those which were symbolically represented by the sealed scroll seen by St. John in the throne vision, in the hands of the One seated on the throne, recorded in chapters four and five, as we read: "After this [that is, after St. John had seen the vision of the Son of Man walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks, and had been instructed to write the messages to the seven Churches] I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven; and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee *things which must be hereafter*."

### **THE APOCALYPSE UNSEALED BY OUR LORD**

We thus see that as the messages to the seven Churches, describing "the *things that are*" -- the conditions existing in the seven Churches--were *preceded by a vision of the Son of Man walking amidst the seven Candlesticks*, likewise, we have the vision of "the things which shall be hereafter" beginning in chapter six, preceded by the throne vision, of chapters four and five. The prophetic portion of the Apocalypse *begins*, then, with the vision of the Lamb unsealing the scroll. (See Rev. 6:1, 2.) This vision conclusively shows that the Apocalypse was unsealed over eighteen hundred years ago. It should be kept in mind that this vision of chapters four and five is an entirely new one, and was designed as a fitting introduction to the prophetic portion of the Book, just as the vision of the Son of Man, walking in the midst of the candlesticks, was a fitting introduction to the messages to the seven Churches. The great central truth taught in this vision is very simple, and easy to be understood by those of God's servants who diligently seek to know its meaning. Briefly stated, leaving out the details, the vision that St. John saw was this:

(1) "A throne set in Heaven."

(2) "In the right hand of him that sat on the throne [was held] a book [scroll], written within and on the backside, *sealed* with seven seals."

(3) An angel is heard by St. John proclaiming with a loud voice: "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seven seals?" St. John relates that for some time no response was heard, and that he wept, supposing that no one was found able to loose the seals.

(4) And while St. John was weeping, one of the Elders besought him to weep not, "for, behold: the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

(5) Then St. John beheld in the vision a Lamb that seemed to have been slain, whom he doubtless recognized as representing the Savior, the Lord Jesus.

(6) He then beheld in the vision this Lamb come up to the throne and receive the book from the Occupant of the throne.

(7) After great rejoicing on the part of the numerous other symbolic personages of the vision, St. John beheld the Lamb break the seals, one after another, and also witnessed certain interesting transactions in connection with the loosing of each one of the seals until the complete scroll was exposed to his view.

The interpretation, stated briefly, seems clearly to be this: That it represented our Lord Jesus being given a full, complete knowledge of the purposes of God the Father. If we can discover when this knowledge was revealed to him, we will be enabled to locate the particular time in the history of our Lord Jesus to which this part of the vision relates. It could not have been at his consecration at Jordan, for the reason that while wonderful things were revealed to him at that time, we know that he did not have a complete knowledge of the unfolding of God's purposes and plans. He himself, just before he was rejected and went to the Cross, said that he was ignorant of the time of his Second Advent. Neither could it have been at the time St. John beheld the vision, about the close of the first century. The time when our Lord received this knowledge was very evidently when he proved himself worthy. This he did when he had finished his sacrifice at Calvary. His resurrection from the dead by the Father was a demonstration of his worthiness, and it was at this time that "all power was given to him in heaven and in earth." All power would of necessity include all knowledge of the Heavenly Father's purposes. The sealed scroll represented those revelations not known at that time by the Savior. The receiving of the scroll would represent his receiving this revelation. This occurred over nineteen hundred years ago. It is very evident that the "sayings of the words of this prophecy" were no longer hidden to him, therefore unsealed.

### **TO SHEW UNTO HIS, SERVANTS**

The object of making these things known to him is stated to be "to shew unto his servants things which must shortly [at that time] come to pass." The words of the Savior in this connection are very significant as elucidating this statement: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." (John 15:15.) "Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth, is come.... he will shew you things to come." - John 16:13.

In the visions of the Apocalypse St. John represents the Church. His seeing the visions represents the Church seeing the fulfillment of them. The words: "to shew unto his servants things that must shortly come to pass," as also the words: "Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter," plainly teach that the prophetic visions are open for the Church's study. Not, however, that they would be understood all at once, but gradually, a little at a time, as the events of the Church's history, unveiled their meaning. This vision of chapters four and five explains most fully and clearly the opening verse of the Apocalypse, in the light of which we are enabled to read it thus:

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ [symbolized by the scroll seen in the right hand of him who sat on the Throne], which God (the One on the Throne) gave unto him [symbolized by the Lamb

receiving the scroll], to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass [the things symbolized by the sealed scroll -- the prophecies of this Book]; and he sent and signified it [made it known by signs or symbols] by his angel unto his servant John [a special servant]."

We briefly sum up our answer to the question,

Is the Apocalypse a sealed book:

(1) God gave to Christ an understanding of all the prophecies of this book. This occurred after his resurrection, before his ascension to heaven.

(2) Christ gave, or caused St. John to see, all the visions that were represented in this sealed scroll, over sixty years after.

(3) St. John, according to Divine instructions, wrote these visions and gave them to the Church at that time.

(4) The visions themselves have been in the possession of the Church ever since that time.

(5) St. John, seeing the visions represented by the things in the sealed scroll gradually, a little at a time, represents the Church seeing the fulfillment as history has unveiled their meaning.

(6) They have therefore been unsealed, that is, open for the Church's study since they were given.

(7) The Church is very specially exhorted to read or hear the words of this prophecy, and is promised a blessing in so doing. The reason for this is that "the time is [was *then*] at hand."

(8) The facts of history show that some of the Lord's servants all down through the Age have read, and of course studied, the visions; and the results of their studies have been published and they show a gradual, progressive understanding of them up to the present time; therefore the visions have been unsealed, that is, they have been open for study ever since St. John's day, and more or less clearly understood.

While it is true that God's servants are not *commanded* to study the Revelation of Christ, it is undoubtedly true that those who have, in the proper attitude of mind and heart, heeded the encouraging and persuasive words of the Savior to read or hear it read, have received the blessing promised. Furthermore, it is most reasonable to suppose that to receive any blessing whatsoever, at least a measure of understanding is required and therefore given.

- *Condensed from the second of a series of six articles published in these pages in 1922 and 1923.*

## The Prayer of Faith -- A Suggestion

WHILE READING the *Diaglott* it was noticed that the word translated "sick" in James 5:14 was *astheneo*, a word derived from *a-sthenes*, meaning without strength (*a*, without; *sthenos*, strength). From this is derived *asthenia*, a word much used in medicine. From my knowledge of medicine I knew that a person might be asthenic without being diseased or sick, so I looked up the word rendered sick in the 15th verse, and this I found to be *kamno*, a word which occurs only three times, and means, "to labor, suffer from fatigue." The two other passages are Hebrews 12:3 and Revelation 2:3, which Young's translation renders as follows: "For consider him who endured such gainsaying from the sinners to himself, that ye may not be wearied [*kamno*] in your souls-being faint" (Heb. 12:3). "And thou didst bear and hast endurance and because of my name hast toiled and not been weary [*kamno*]" (Rev. 2:3). These passages would indicate that it was the weary and weak in faith who was told to call for the elders and not the one suffering from disease. There are other words which mean sick, such as *nosos*, meaning sickness, unsoundness, disease; *echo kakos*, meaning to be ill.

These two words are never used to denote moral or spiritual sickness, while *asthenos* in its various forms is so used, and while it is frequently rendered sick in the common version, it is never rendered sick in Young's translation, and the Revised Version has the number of times reduced.

There are three words rendered "healed," viz., (1) *therapeuo*, meaning to attend to, heal, cure; *sozo*, to make sound or whole; *iaomai*, meaning to heal. This last word is the one used by James, and has also the significance of saved, as the following passage (Matt. 13:15) will show: "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal [*iaomai*] them." (See also Acts 28:27, 28.) Luke 4:18: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal [*iaomai*] the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." John 12:40: "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal [*iaomai*] them."

Acts 10:38: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing [*iaomai*] all that were oppressed of the devil." 1 Pet. 2:24: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed [*iaomai*]."

These passages can be applied only in a moral or spiritual sense, while *therapeuo* is never applied in such a sense but always relates to a cure of a physical disease.

As examples of the use of *astheneo*, note the following: Matt. 8:17: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities [*astheneia*], and bare our sicknesses [*nosos*]." Matt. 26:41: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak [*astheneia*]." Rom. 4:19: "And being not weak [*astheneo*] in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb." Rom. 5:6: "For when we were yet without strength [*asthenes*], in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Rom. 6:19: "I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity [*astheneia*] of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your

members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." Rom. 8:3: "For what the law could not do in that it was weak [*astheneo*] through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Rom. 8:26: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities [*astheneia*]: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Rom. 14:1, 2: "Him that is weak [*astheneo*] in faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak [*astheneo*], eateth herbs." 1 Cor. 8:11, 12: "And through thy knowledge shall the weak [*astheneo*] brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak [*asthenes*] conscience, ye sin against Christ." Heb. 4:15: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities [*asthenia*]; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

*Nosos* is the word most commonly used to denote sickness or disease and occurs in the same verse in contrast to *astheneia*, viz., Matt. 8:17: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias, the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities [*astheneia*], and bare our sicknesses [*nosos*]."

From the foregoing it is concluded that James referred to Christians who had become weak in faith, or to use a common expression, had "backslidden." This is indicated in verse 16, the word "faults" being translated from *paraptoma*, meaning a falling away.

The following is a more literal translation of James 5:14-16: *'Is any weak among you, let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the wearied one. And the Lord shall raise him up, and though he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him. Confess your fallings away one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'*

- J. E. Taylor, M.D. (1907)

R4100

## The Question Box

*"Let the dead bury their dead." - Matt. 8:22.*

*Question:*

What is the meaning of our Lord's words here?

*Answer:*

The word "dead" is used in two different senses here, although in the Greek it is the same word in both places.

From God's standpoint the whole of Adam's race is regarded as dead, both those who are in the grave and those who are on the way there. We speak of being in the "land of the living," but it would be more exact to use the phrase, "land of the dying." Since both "dead" and "dying" all share the sentence of death passed upon Father Adam because of his transgression, they are properly spoken of as "dead." We ourselves sometimes use the word "dead" in the sense of "indifference"; some are "dead" (or indifferent) to the great beauty of character manifested in Christ; they are "dead" (indifferent) to the Gospel message of salvation. St. Paul instructs us (the Church) to count ourselves dead\* indeed by sin; but, praise be to God, he adds that we may also count ourselves living by God in Christ Jesus. - Rom. 6:11.

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\* Same word as in Matthew 8:22.

By studying the context we are able to see that what at first glance might seem to be a very harsh instruction falling from the Master's lips, was not so in reality. First one and then another *was* approaching him, expressing the intention of becoming his follower. First came a scribe saying: "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." (Matt. 8:19; Luke 9:57.) This one had apparently much the same spirit as Peter had shown before his sifting, conversion, and strengthening; a large measure of self-confidence. But it takes much more than an impulsive resolution, made in one's own strength, to be a follower of the Master. Then, too, his thought in planning to follow the Master may have been merely in the expectation of earthly reward shortly to be his. Most of the Jews who had any acquaintance at all with our Lord, and who thought he might be the long promised Messiah, expected that he would very soon exert his authority, break the Roman yoke, and establish his throne in Israel, and through Israel rule the world. This man probably held the same view.

Whatever the man's motives, they were evidently such as to disqualify him for immediate service in the ministry. Our Lord seems to have effectively discouraged him from joining his company by his reply: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

Next there came another disciple -- another would -- be follower of the Lord. Said he to Jesus: "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." But to him the Lord replied: "Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead."

In ordinary circumstances there would be nothing wrong, on the contrary it would be commendable, in a young man to wish to make proper arrangements for his father's funeral before embarking on a new and possibly hazardous mission. But the circumstances were not ordinary. This is more easily seen in the parallel passage in Luke (Luke 9:51-10:22.) There, after

telling him to "let the dead bury their dead," Jesus goes on to say: "But go thou and preach the Kingdom of God."

Jesus was just then sending out a mission of seventy. He had a place for this man to fill, in that army of evangelists who were being sent before him on such an important, so urgent a ministry. Such mission would brook no delay.

It is instructive to note, further, how differently our Lord dealt with this man from the way he dealt with the first. This one was not like the first, full of self-confidence. On the contrary, he had a reflective character, one given to pondering matters; a character which was wary almost to the point of excess. Our Lord's words to him are not a correction of presumptuous self-conceit, as in the first case. Rather they are with the intention of stimulating him to a prompt and right decision: "Follow me."

It is quite possible that had it been really necessary for the man to have buried his father-if there had been no one else available to perform that duty, our Lord might have allowed him the necessary time and delayed the mission of the seventy. But even if the Lord could have spared him that much time, and the mission been postponed, it is very probable that, however short the postponement, the time would have proved too much for the man's own spiritual good. For consider: It is obvious that he was only just approaching the point of consecration. No doubt our Lord saw that there would be danger to his yet unripened discipleship if he were to return, even for only a brief stay, to what might well have been a worldly circle of relatives and friends. Moreover, after the funeral, he might find it necessary to make inquiry about the will, and then about the distribution of the inheritance; one thing would easily lead to another, and before long, he would get buried altogether in earthly affairs, and no longer be interested in following the Lord, and having a share in the ministry. In short, our Lord's purpose, in addition to his own need of dispatching the seventy on their mission without delay, may have been to guard this man from an experience which, in his then stage of Christian development, might have proved too much for him. At all events he was given a clear, decisive call: "Follow me."

Tradition has it that this man's name was Philip. If so it could not have been the Apostle of that name, for he had been long following Jesus. (John 6.) However, it might have been the deacon Philip, who afterwards played so important a part in the early Church. (Acts 6:5; 8:5; 21:8.) If so, would it not afford yet another instance of the skill -- the matchless skill -- of the Great Fisher of men?

And now, what is the practical lesson for us? We are not apostles; we are not even of the seventy. We have not been commissioned as were they. Yet in a very real sense we, too, have been set apart unto the Gospel of God. With us as with them, *this is* the chief business of our lives. The ministry of the Gospel is not to be with us incidental to other matters more important. It is not even one important thing among others which hold place in our lives. No! It *is the* business of our life to which all else is incidental, to which all else is, and must be *held*, subservient.

Even here, however, it may be well to add a word of caution. As Brother Russell has observed: "Not all are called to an open, public ministry, devoting all of time, talent, effort, and interest to the Gospel message. The majority of the called the Lord evidently intends to instruct as his disciples while they are about their ordinary business, the duties and responsibilities of life.

"With these, however, it is necessary that there be a forsaking of boats and fishing tackle, etc., in the heart from the moment that a full consecration is made to the Lord. We cannot serve God and Mammon. We cannot have two objects in life, both equally prominent to our attention. The Lord



will not have it so with those who are to be his joint-heirs in the Kingdom. This class must appreciate the privilege of fellowship in his labor, sufferings, and hopes of glory to such an extent that their hearts will no longer be in the ordinary affairs of life, their ambitions will no longer be for wealth or name or fame from the world's standpoint. All such ambitions and hopes we must 'forsake' if we would be his disciples. . . .

"This seems to be the thought of the Apostle when he urges us to lay aside every weight and entanglement that we may run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author of our faith, until he shall have become its finisher. Let us as promptly as possible, at the beginning of our Christian experience, settle once for all the matter of surrendering our wills to be followers of the Lamb; let us once for all arrange as wisely as possible our temporal affairs and interests in accordance with the reasonable demands of others respecting the same, and let us then faithfully persevere to the end of the race course."

- P. L. Read

## **These Many Years!**

These many years! What lessons they unfold  
Of grace and guidance through the wilderness,  
From the same God that Israel of old  
In the Shekinah glory did possess.  
How faithful He, through all my griefs and fears  
And constant murmurings, these many years!

God of the Covenant! From first to last,  
From when I stood within that sprinkled door,  
And o'er my guilt the avenging angel passed,  
Thy better angel hath gone on before;  
And naught but goodness all the way appears,  
Unmerited and free, these many years!

Lord, what I might have been, my spirit knows --  
Rebellious, petulant, and prone to stray;  
Lord, what I am, in spite of flesh and foes,  
I owe to grace that kept me in the way.  
Thine be the glory! Merit disappears,  
As back I look upon these many years.

Thine be the glory! Thou shalt have the praise  
For all Thy dealings, to my latest breath;  
A daily "Ebenezer" will I raise,  
And sing "Salvation" through the vale of death --  
To where the crown, the golden harp appears,  
There to rehearse Thy love through endless years!